

Financial Feasibility and Implementation Plan

This document includes the recommended/locally preferred trail alignment for the Chorro Valley Trail Study, along with the recommended project phasing, based on our analysis of existing conditions and environmental opportunities and constraints, costs, financial feasibility and implementation feasibility, and property owner/stakeholder and public workshop input. For each envisioned trail segment, we have identified preliminary project costs, the agency responsible for implementation and management, as well as the next steps will be to address significant constraints and other actions to implement each priority project, including responsible parties, supporting, reviewing and/or approving parties, and any potentially needed legislative actions or right-of-way acquisition. This will include actions needed to secure funding. This section also includes a summary of potential funding sources.

A. Preliminary Trail Alignment and Phasing

Construction of the Chorro Valley Trail system will likely be phased over many years to reflect available funds for implementation, as well as a timeline to allow necessary permits, right-of-way (ROW), agency cooperation, and coordination with property owners.

Based on a review of engineering and environmental opportunities and constraints, discussions with stakeholders and property owner representatives, input from the project Advisory Committee and two public workshops, the following combination of segments appears to be “Most Feasible”.

Long-Term Trail Segments

- Segments 1A through 3A (north side of Highway 1 from Cal Poly Campus to Cuesta College (cross-over to south side of Highway 1 either via retrofitted Dairy Creek Culvert or at the signalized Hollister Ave. intersection).
- Segments 4 B through 7B (south side of Highway 1 from Cuesta College to Quintana Road at South Bay Blvd).

Interim Trail Segments and Phasing

It is not presently possible to determine the timing of construction of all of the phases of the Chorro Valley Trail. Project priorities and phasing will be driven in large part by the availability of funds, and in some cases the ability to implement trail projects in conjunction with other related projects. The relative complexity of projects, difficult environmental and permitting issues, problems with right-of-way acquisition, the interest of the public agency stakeholders in building trails on their lands, and public demand will all influence trail construction phasing.

Presented here is an approach to project phasing for stakeholder and public review and to facilitate further discussion. This Feasibility Study is intended to help in the preparation of grant applications by providing draft trail alignment maps, and baseline environmental information, including opportunities and constraints, descriptions of trail alignments and who might build, operate and maintain them, and costs for the design and construction of the trail segments. This would allow all

of the interested stakeholders and public agency landowners within the trail corridor the flexibility and ability to actively pursue projects as needs arise and opportunities for trail construction present themselves.

First Phase

The first phase and the segment that appears to be most feasible to initially move forward in right-of-way and funding acquisition for design, environmental review and construction are the segments between Cal Poly at Highland Drive and Cuesta College (Segments 1A through 3A). These segments would cross lands own and managed by Cal Poly, the California Men's Colony, Camp SLO, and Cuesta College.

If Mt. Bishop Road were to be used as a part of this route, it could initially be modified to as part of a Class III (sharrow) through-going trail system with wayfinding signage, striping and some modest capital improvements, for instance at intersections and along the west side of Highland Drive. An ultimate goal may be to have the Class I trail along the existing Stenner Creek pathway, but additional security discussions with Cal Poly campus officials and pathway improvements to widen the trail and pave it will be needed.

Second Phase

The second phase would be to construct segments 5B and the east half of 6B, beginning at Cuesta College and extending westerly through Cal Poly grazing lands along a new road near the edge of the Caltrans Highway ROW, and then using the existing Tomasini Road on CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife property to terminate at a new staging area at Hollister Peak Ranch.

Through going cyclists could use the Highway 1 shoulder heading east via an improved connection at Hollister Peak Ranch or if heading west, use the Wildlife Refuge existing equipment undercrossing and an improved connection to the Highway 1 west bound shoulder.

Phases 1 and 2 do not appear to contain any significant engineering and environmental constraints and obtaining right-of-way from the public land owners involved is achievable. Phases 1 and 2 could be constructed together within three to five years, if sufficient funding can be obtained.

Third Phase

This final and most difficult and challenging phase would be constructing segments 6B and 7B. This is the pathway from the historic Hollister Peak Ranch west along the existing Tomasini Road and a short, new connection to Canet Road. The pathway would cross San Luisito Creek Road via a new bridge/ boardwalk section along the Highway 1 embankment within the Caltrans right-of-way. The trail would be located along the outer edge of the Caltrans ROW adjacent to private farm lands through the west half of segment 6B, where it would cross San Bernardo Creek to connect to Quintana Road. Some improvements to Quintana Road, including potentially lane shifting, road re-alignment and/or shoulder widening would be needed to accommodate a Class I facility along Quintana Road, and safety improvements are especially needed at the South Bay Blvd. intersection. This phase could also be potentially constructed as a series of sub-phases (such as Hollister Ranch to Canet Road), using the shoulder of Highway 1 as an interim, for eastbound bicycle traffic, although

the west bound route would need to enter the Highway 1 shoulder at the Wildlife Refuge farm equipment under-crossing east of Hollister Peak Ranch until the complete west half of the trail is built. Making safe, well-signed connections from the proposed Class I trail to the Caltrans shoulder-riding area will be a very important design challenge.

B. Construction and Operations & Maintenance Responsibilities

Virtually all of the trail segments would be constructed, operated, and maintained by the San Luis Obispo County Parks Department under a long term lease agreement or other form of easement or Memorandum of Understanding with the public land owners and their respective Boards and Commissions. County Parks would also serve as lead agency for environmental review, project permitting, design, and construction oversight. This would include trail sections located on lands owned or managed by the California Men's Colony, (agreement with Calif. Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation), Camp SLO, (agreement with Calif. General Services Agency) and the California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Service refuge lands (agreement with Calif. Fish & Wildlife Commission). It is likely that Camp SLO and the Men's Colony would provide some increased security patrol of trail sections within or near their property, in coordination with the County Sheriff's Department.

Any trail segment within the Caltrans right-of-way would be constructed and operated under their procedures for an encroachment permit. It is possible that any needed safety and convenience improvements for interim segments along the shoulder of Highway 1, including potentially any improvements to intersections could be funded and constructed by Caltrans, but this will require additional discussions and analysis by them.

Some of the trail may be on County roads, such as Quintana Road, and County Public Works may be responsible for construction and operations and maintenance of this segment, along with any improvements to the South Bay Blvd. intersection for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Cal Poly would construct, operate, and maintain any trail segments on their main campus, but would likely defer to County Parks in a cooperative agreement and long term lease arrangement for the trail segments on their farm and ranch lands west of Cuesta College.

C. Mitigation Concepts

In addition to construction of trail facilities, the project will need to make enhancements to the natural resources of the watershed as mitigation to offset impacts, such as fish passage barrier removal projects, and erosion control and sediment reduction. This could be completed cooperatively with Coastal SLO Resource Conservation District and Morro Bay estuary. This could potentially include removal and replacement of private bridge crossings on Chorro Creek and its tributaries that are barriers to fish passage, funding restoration projects on Wildlife Refuge lands, and the development of native grass pastures on Wildlife Refuge lands and their harvesting using "old-time farm equipment." This could potentially be an interesting interpretive element to Hollister Peak Ranch, as well as compensatory to Cal Poly for loss of the pasture and hay lands from trail construction.

D. Project Cost Estimate

Planning level cost estimates were developed by trail segment for the three main trail alignment options or alternatives being considered:

- Option A, primarily north side of Highway 1 (57,900 linear feet or 11.0 miles)
- Option B, primarily south side of Highway 1 (54,700 linear feet or 10.4 miles)
- Apparent Most Feasible/Locally Preferred Option (combinations of segments A & B) (57,500 linear feet or 10.9 miles)

The cost estimates include cost allocations for: 1) concept planning, preliminary engineering special environmental studies, and preliminary right-of-way and Easement analysis 2) environmental review and project permitting 3) final engineering design, including right-of-way and Easement acquisition 4) construction 5) construction management and inspection, and 6) ongoing Operations and Maintenance.

Since nearly all of the trail alignment will be on publically owned land, right-of-way acquisition costs are considered small for this project. A contingency for right-of-way acquisition is recommended in the event that a small amount of private land needs to be acquired from willing sellers of private lands near the proposed trail corridor. As stated in Policy 3.11 of the County's Parks and Recreation Element (adopted in 2006), the County will not use eminent domain to obtain lands for trail establishment.

In addition to a contingency for right-of-way acquisition, a contingency was developed for Project Mitigation, including contributions for watershed soil erosion control and sediment reduction, fish passage barrier removal, and stream restoration. These are among the greatest environmental needs of the Chorro Creek watershed which is tributary to Morro Bay.

Since this is a Feasibility Study, and no preliminary designs have been developed, considerable judgment went into developing the planning level cost estimates. The cost estimates were based on take offs and quantity estimates from the Engineering Analysis completed as a part of development of the Design and Operating Guidelines. The methodology used in developing the cost estimates for the project is included in the Appendix, along with the cost estimating work sheets for each of the Options evaluated.

Table 1 summarizes the anticipated costs for the three Options evaluated.

TABLE 1: CHORRO VALLEY TRAIL COST ESTIMATE

ALIGNMENT OPTION	Grading and Paving									Retaining Wall		Pavement Rehab.		Signage & Striping		Bike/Ped. Bridges		Special Structures*		Field Fencing		Security Fencing		Trailhead Parking		Intersection Improvements		OPTION TOTALS
	A		B		C		D		G&P Subtotals																			
	(\$95/LF)		(\$140/LF)		(\$250/LF)		(\$350/LF)				(\$300/LF)		(\$36/LF)		(\$3/LF)		(\$2,500/LF)		LS		(\$10/LF)		(\$80/LF)		(\$25,000/EA)		(\$100,000/EA)	
	LF	Cost	LF	Cost	LF	Cost	LF	Cost		LF	Cost	LF	Cost	LF	Cost	LF	Cost	LS	Cost	LF	Cost	LF	Cost	EA	Cost	EA	Cost	
OPTION A																												
1A (6,40 LF)	700	\$66,500	0	\$0		\$0		\$0	\$66,500	0	\$0	5,700	\$205,200	6,400	\$19,200	0	\$0			500	\$5,000	200	\$16,000	1	\$25,000	2	\$200,000	\$536,900
2A (6,500 LF)	1,700	\$161,500	1,000	\$140,000		\$0		\$0	\$301,500	0	\$0	3,800	\$136,800	6,500	\$19,500	50	\$125,000			800	\$8,000	1,300	\$104,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$694,800
3A (12,000 LF)	5,000	\$475,000	0	\$0		\$0		\$0	\$475,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	12,000	\$36,000	200	\$500,000	#1	\$960,000	2,200	\$22,000	9,800	\$784,000	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$2,877,000
4A (4,000 LF)	4,000	\$380,000	0	\$0		\$0		\$0	\$380,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	4,000	\$12,000	150	\$375,000	#2	\$200,000	2,000	\$20,000	0	\$0	1	\$25,000	1	\$100,000	\$1,112,000
5A (12,200 LF)	11,000	\$1,045,000	1,000	\$140,000		\$0		\$0	\$1,185,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	12,200	\$36,600	200	\$500,000			9,100	\$91,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$1,912,600
6A (8,300 LF)	5,500	\$522,500	1,300	\$182,000		\$0		\$0	\$704,500	2,200	\$660,000	1,500	\$54,000	8,300	\$24,900	50	\$125,000			7,200	\$72,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$1,740,400
7A (8,500 LF)	7,200	\$684,000	0	\$0		\$0		\$0	\$684,000	400	\$120,000	1,300	\$46,800	8,500	\$25,500	0	\$0	#5	\$250,000	8,100	\$81,000	0	\$0	1	\$25,000	3	\$300,000	\$1,532,300
SUBTOTAL	35,100	\$3,334,500	3,300	\$462,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$3,796,500	2,600	\$780,000	12,300	\$442,800	57,900	\$173,700	650	\$1,625,000	0	\$1,410,000	29,900	\$299,000	11,300	\$904,000	3	\$75,000	9	\$900,000	\$10,406,000
																											20% CONTINGENCY	\$2,081,200
																											OPTION A TOTAL	\$12,487,200
OPTION B																												
1B (5,000 LF)	2,500	\$237,500	1,000	\$140,000	500	\$125,000	1,000	\$350,000	\$852,500	1,500	\$450,000	0	\$0	5,000	\$15,000	0	\$0			0	\$0		\$0	1	\$25,000	3	\$300,000	\$1,642,500
2B (6,000 LF)	3,500	\$332,500	1,000	\$140,000	500	\$125,000	1,000	\$350,000	\$947,500	2,000	\$600,000	0	\$0	6,000	\$18,000	0	\$0			1,500	\$15,000		\$0	0	\$0	2	\$200,000	\$1,780,500
3B (11,700 LF)	5,000	\$475,000		\$0		\$0		\$0	\$475,000	0	\$0	6,700	\$241,200	11,700	\$35,100	0	\$0	#3	\$960,000	3,200	\$32,000		\$0	0	\$0	3	\$300,000	\$2,043,300
4B (4,000 LF)	0	\$0		\$0		\$0		\$0	\$0	0	\$0	4,000	\$144,000	4,000	\$12,000	150	\$375,000			4,000	\$40,000		\$0	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$671,000
5B (12,500 LF)	4,800	\$456,000		\$0		\$0		\$0	\$456,000	0	\$0	7,700	\$277,200	12,500	\$37,500	100	\$250,000			9,500	\$95,000		\$0	1	\$25,000	1	\$100,000	\$1,240,700
6B (8,000 LF)	2,800	\$266,000		\$0		\$0		\$0	\$266,000	0	\$0	3,700	\$133,200	8,000	\$24,000	0	\$0	#4	\$100,000	7,500	\$75,000	800	\$64,000	1	\$25,000	1	\$100,000	\$787,200
7B (8,000 LF)	2,700	\$256,500		\$0		\$0		\$0	\$256,500	0	\$0	5,100	\$183,600	8,000	\$24,000	100	\$250,000				\$0		\$0	1	\$25,000	3	\$300,000	\$1,039,100
SUBTOTAL	21,300	\$2,023,500	2,000	\$280,000	1,000	\$250,000	2,000	\$700,000	\$3,253,500	3,500	\$1,050,000	27,200	\$979,200	55,200	\$165,600	350	\$875,000	0	\$1,060,000	25,700	\$257,000	800	\$64,000	4	\$100,000	14	\$1,400,000	\$9,204,300
																											20% CONTINGENCY	\$1,840,860
																											OPTION B TOTAL	\$11,045,160
OPTION C																												
1C (800 LF)		\$0		\$0	0	\$0		\$0	\$0	0	\$0	800	\$28,800	800	\$2,400	0	\$0	0		400	\$4,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$50,000	\$85,200
SUBTOTAL	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	800	\$28,800	800	\$2,400	0	\$0	0	\$0	400	\$4,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$50,000	\$85,200
																											20% CONTINGENCY	\$17,040
																											OPTION C TOTAL	\$102,240
PREFERRED OPTION																												
1A (6,40 LF)	700	\$66,500	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$66,500	0	\$0	5,700	\$205,200	6,400	\$19,200	0	\$0	0	\$0	500	\$5,000	200	\$16,000	1	\$25,000	2	\$200,000	\$536,900
2A (6,500 LF)	1,700	\$161,500	1,000	\$140,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$301,500	0	\$0	3,800	\$136,800	6,500	\$19,500	50	\$125,000	0	\$0	800	\$8,000	1,300	\$104,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$694,800
3A (12,000 LF)	5,000	\$475,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$475,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	12,000	\$36,000	200	\$500,000	#1	\$960,000	2,200	\$22,000	9,800	\$784,000	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$2,877,000
4B (4,000 LF)	3,900	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$0	0	\$0	4,000	\$144,000	4,000	\$12,000	150	\$375,000	2	\$0	4,000	\$40,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$100,000	\$671,000
5B (12,500 LF)	12,060	\$456,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$456,000	0	\$0	7,700	\$277,200	12,500	\$37,500	100	\$250,000	0	\$0	9,500	\$95,000	0	\$0	1	\$25,000	1	\$100,000	\$1,240,700
6B (8,000 LF)	8,130	\$266,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$266,000	0	\$0	3,700	\$133,200	8,000	\$24,000	0	\$0	#4	\$100,000	7,500	\$75,000	800	\$64,000	1	\$25,000	1	\$100,000	\$787,200
7B (8,000 LF)	8,420	\$256,500	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$256,500	0	\$0	5,100	\$183,600	8,000	\$24,000	100	\$250,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	0	\$0	1	\$25,000	3	\$300,000	\$1,039,100
SUBTOTAL	39,910	\$1,681,500	1,000	\$140,000	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$1,821,500	0	\$0	30,000	\$1,080,000	57,400	\$172,200	600	\$1,500,000	2	\$1,060,000	24,500	\$245,000	12,100	\$968,000	4	\$100,000	9	\$900,000	\$7,846,700
																											20% CONTINGENCY	\$1,569,340
																											PREF. TOTAL	\$9,416,040

0 = Unfeasible segment for grading & paving

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION - OPTION A:		\$12,487,200	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION - OPTION B:		\$11,045,160	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION - OPTION C:		\$102,240	TOTAL CONSTRUCTION - PREFERRED ROUTE:		\$9,416,040
2% Planning & Prelim. Engineering	\$249,744		2% Planning & Prelim. Engineering	\$220,903		2% Planning & Prelim. Engineering	\$2,045		2% Planning & Prelim. Engineering	\$188,321	
4% Environmental Review & Permitting	\$499,488		4% Environmental Review & Permitting	\$441,806		4% Environmental Review & Permitting	\$4,090		4% Environmental Review & Permitting	\$376,642	
10% Final Engineering	\$1,248,720		10% Final Engineering	\$1,104,516		10% Final Engineering	\$10,224		10% Final Engineering	\$941,604	
15% Construction Management	\$1,873,080		15% Construction Management	\$1,656,774		15% Construction Management	\$15,336		15% Construction Management	\$1,412,406	
TOTAL:	\$16,358,232		TOTAL: TOTAL:	\$14,469,160		TOTAL:	\$133,934		TOTAL:	\$12,335,012	

* Special Structures

- 1) Seg. 3A - Enclosed pre-engineered overcrossing, 300 ft. @ \$3,200/LF= \$960,000
2) Seg. 4A - Retrofit Dairy Creek culvert - allow \$200,000
3) Seg. 6B - Cantilevered aluminum boardwalk on helical earth anchor piers - 800 LF @ \$1,200/LF = \$960,000
4) Seg.6B - Retrofit equipment under-crossing - allow \$100,000
5) Seg 7A - Permanent traffic barrier - 1000 LF @ \$250/LF = \$250,000

E. Summary of Transportation Funding Opportunities

This section provides a summary of current funding opportunities related to trails, and matches funding opportunities to the project implementation steps in the Implementation Plan. The trail projects (segments) will be matched to potential funding programs, and the specific program criteria. In some cases, projects may be selected or organized to meet grant program funding criteria, or projects may be jointly implemented by project partners such as the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, CDFW, Cuesta College or others.

Understanding Transportation Funding

Approximately every six years, the U.S. Congress adopts a surface transportation act — Congress’s authorization to spend tax dollars on highways, streets, roads, transit and other transportation related projects throughout the U.S. The most recent surface transportation act is titled “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21). The legislation was signed into law on July 6, 2012. MAP-21 funding is allocated to states based on federal formulas. The Federal formulas allocate a portion of each state’s funds to specific surface transportation programs such as transit, congestion mitigation, and highways; while other portions of these funds are allocated to the states for use in discretionary programs. In California, these funds are generally administered by Caltrans or the Resources Agency, although most programs are then distributed through regional governments such as the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG). The regional government agencies, which vary by location within the State, administer the funding of local projects. The majority of the funding programs established in the legislation are transportation versus recreation oriented, with an emphasis on reducing auto trips and traffic congestion, improving traffic safety, developing intermodal transportation systems, and reducing pollutants and emissions produced by transportation.

Bicycle, pedestrian, trail (recreational trails), and school safety improvement projects may be funded by a variety of federal, state, regional, and/or local funding programs. Federal and state programs have continued to acknowledge the importance of these improvements with increased flexibility in the major funding programs, along with the development of dedicated programs for “active” or “non-motorized” transportation projects. Project funding may also be obtained through bond measures, special tax districts, private entities, and/or directly by a local agency’s general fund.

Funding Local Transportation Projects

To be eligible for funding, projects must meet a variety of criteria. Typically, projects must be listed in a Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP). Listing in an RTIP is generally achieved through local actions such as listing in a local agency’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the completion and adoption of a bicycle master plan, pedestrian master plan, specific plan, project study report, feasibility study, and/or other special studies. These planning efforts serve to evaluate potential projects and demonstrate their value through the public process. The result is typically a quantification of the costs and benefits of a project (such as saved vehicle trips, safety index ratings, and/or reduced emissions), proof of public involvement and support, environmental review at the state or federal level, evaluation of project alternatives, and the identification and elimination of potential fatal flaws, or development of overriding considerations. Next, the allocation of funds typically requires a commitment of local resources. In most cases, MAP-21 programs will provide 80

to 90 percent funding of a local project, but there is a preference to leverage other moneys and demonstrate a cooperative funding approach.

Summary of Programs

The following section presents a general description of funding programs that can be used to implement the projects contained in this study.

Federal Programs

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21)

In July 2012, P.L. 112-141, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law, funding surface transportation programs at over \$105 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014. MAP-21 is the first long-term highway authorization enacted since 2005. MAP-21 provides needed funds, and it transformed policy and the programmatic framework that guides the growth and development of the country's transportation infrastructure. MAP-21 creates a streamlined, performance-based, and multimodal program to address the challenges facing the nation's transportation system. These challenges include improving safety, maintaining infrastructure, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency, protecting the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery. MAP-21 builds on and refines many of the highway, transit, bike, and pedestrian programs and policies established in the 1990's.

MAP-21 replaced SAFETEA-LU with a similar amount of total funding, but significantly changed the overall number and scope of programs. For example, the number of programs has been consolidated by two-thirds. The Transportation Enhancements (TE) program has been eliminated and replaced with the Transportation Alternatives Program (TA). The new TA program encompasses most of the previous bike, trail, pedestrian, and school safety funding mechanisms from SAFETEA-LU. Under MAP-21, states allocate 50 percent of their TA funds to the regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's such as SLOCOG) and local communities to run grant programs and administer funds for local projects. States can use the remaining 50 percent for TA projects or can spend these funds on other transportation priorities.

Web Link: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/>

Transportation Alternatives Program

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) authorized under Section 1122 of MAP-21 provides approximately \$72 million in funding through Caltrans for programs and projects in California defined as transportation alternatives, including on- road and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for the planning, design or construction of boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. Under TAP, Caltrans, Metropolitan Planning Organizations

(MPOs), and nonprofits are not eligible as direct grant recipients of the funds. Caltrans, MPOs, and nonprofits are eligible to partner with any eligible entity on an eligible TAP project.

Web Link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/transprog/map21.htm>

National Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds for recreational trails and trails-related projects. The RTP is administered at the federal level by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). It is administered at the state level by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Non-motorized projects are administered by the Department's Office of Grants and Local Services (OGLS), motorized projects are administered by the Department's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. Examples of trail uses include hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, and other non-motorized as well as motorized uses.

Recreational Trails Program funds may be used for:

- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails;
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages;
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment;
- Construction of new trails (with restrictions for new trails on federal lands);
- Acquisition of easements or property for trails;
- State administrative costs related to this program (limited to seven percent of a State's funds); and
- Operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to trails (limited to five percent of a State's funds).

Eligible applicants include cities and counties, parks districts, state agencies, Federal agencies, and non-profit organizations with management responsibilities of public lands. There is no maximum or minimum limit on grant request amounts. The maximum amount of RTP funds allowed for each project is 88% of the total project cost. The applicant is responsible for obtaining a match amount that is at least 12% of the total project cost. Eligible match sources include: State funds, including State Grant funds; Local funds, including general funds and bond funds; Private funds; Donated materials and services; Value of donated land (for Acquisition projects only); and other federal funds. The RTP non-motorized funding program will provide approximately \$1.47 million per year. The current federal RTP funding source, MAP-21, expires September 30, 2014. OGALS cannot announce a request for new applications until it can verify that a re-authorization of MAP-21 or a new authorization has been signed into law. The next RTP Application Filing Deadline: Unknown, and no earlier than 2015.

Web Link: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24324

Highway Safety Improvement Program

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), which is administered by Caltrans, remains as one of the core federal-aid programs. HSIP funds are intended to help achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. The Federal Program requires states to develop and implement a Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) that identifies improvement strategies to address traffic safety. Funds can be used for safety improvement projects on any public road or publicly owned bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail. A safety improvement project corrects or improves a hazardous roadway condition, or proactively addresses highway safety problems that may include: intersection improvements; installation of rumble strips and other warning devices; elimination of roadside obstacles; railway-highway grade crossing safety; pedestrian or bicycle safety; traffic calming; improving highway signage and pavement marking; installing traffic control devices at high crash locations or priority control systems for emergency vehicles at signalized intersections, safety conscious planning and improving crash data collection and analysis, etc. Caltrans sets aside funds for construction and operational improvements on high-risk rural roads and may use the remainder of funds for bicycle and pedestrian pathways or trails and education and enforcement. Caltrans' call for projects and application deadlines vary from year to year. HSIP funds could potentially be used to improve key intersections.

Web Link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/hsip.html>

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program provides grants for planning and acquiring outdoor recreation areas and facilities, including trails. LWCF is administered by the National Parks Service and the California Department of Parks and Recreation and has been reauthorized until 2015. Cities, counties, tribes, and districts authorized to acquire, develop, operate and maintain park and recreation facilities are eligible to apply. Applicants must fund the entire project and will be reimbursed for fifty percent of costs. \$2,000,000.00 is the maximum request amount for any individual project.

Eligible project must meet two specific criteria. The first is that projects acquired or developed under the program must be primarily for recreational use and not transportation purposes, and the second is that the lead agency must guarantee to maintain the facility in perpetuity for public recreation. Applications are considered using criteria such as priority status within the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The State Department of Park and Recreation will select which projects to submit to the National Park Service (NPS) for approval. Final approval is based on the amount of funds available that year, which is determined by a population-based formula, with a 40/60 split for northern and southern California respectively.

Web Link: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21360

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. This program provides technical assistance via direct staff involvement to establish and restore greenways, rivers, trails, watersheds, and open space areas. The RTCA program provides planning assistance only. Projects are prioritized for assistance based upon criteria that include conserving

significant community resources, fostering cooperation between agencies, serving a large number of users, encouraging public involvement in planning and implementation and focusing on lasting accomplishments. Federal agencies may be the lead partner only in collaboration with a non-federal partner.

Web Link: <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

Federal Lands Transportation Program

The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) funds projects that improve access within the Federal estate (national forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges, national recreation areas, and other Federal public lands) on transportation facilities in the national Federal Lands transportation inventory and owned and maintained by the Federal government. Eligible activities include: program administration, transportation planning, research, preventive maintenance, engineering, rehabilitation, restoration, construction, and reconstruction of Federal lands transportation facilities, and adjacent vehicular parking areas; acquisition of necessary scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; provision for pedestrians and bicycles; environmental mitigation in or adjacent to Federal land open to the public to (1) improve public safety and reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity; and (2) to mitigate the damage to wildlife, aquatic organism passage, habitat, and ecosystem connectivity, including the costs of constructing, maintaining, replacing, or removing culverts and bridges, as appropriate; construction and reconstruction of roadside rest areas; congestion mitigation; and, other appropriate public road facilities as determined by the Secretary. The projects must be transportation-related and tied to a plan adopted by the state and local metropolitan planning organization.

Web Link: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/factsheets/fltp.cfm>

State Funding Programs

Caltrans

Funding for new projects for nonmotorized transportation facilities along a State highway or within its right-of-way generally falls into one of the following categories:

- Replacement of an existing major route for nonmotorized traffic that is being severed or destroyed by freeway construction (S&H Code – Section 888)
- Provision of a nonmotorized facility along a new freeway corridor where nonmotorized facilities do not exist (S&H Code – Section 888.2)
- Provision of a nonmotorized facility along a State highway under a Cooperative Agreement at the request of a local agency (S&H Code – Section 887.6)

- Provision of a nonmotorized facility along a State highway based upon a finding that the traffic safety or capacity of the highway will be increased (S&H Code – Section 887.8). The finding is made in consultation with appropriate law enforcement agencies.
- Part 3 – Specific Project Development Procedures (31-4 07/01/1999L Project Development Procedures Manual).

Active Transportation Program

In September of 2013, the California legislation created the Active Transportation Program (ATP) to be administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The ATP consolidates existing federal and state transportation programs, including the **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)**, **Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)**, and **State Safe Routes to School (SR2S)**, into a single program with a focus to make California a national leader in active transportation. The ATP is administered by the Division of Local Assistance, Office of Active Transportation and Special Programs. The purpose of ATP is to encourage increased use of active modes of transportation by achieving the following goals:

- Increase the proportion of trips accomplished by biking and walking,
- Increase safety and mobility for non-motorized users,
- Advance the active transportation efforts of regional agencies to achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals,
- Enhance public health,
- Ensure that disadvantaged communities fully share in the benefits of the program, and
- Provide a broad spectrum of projects to benefit many types of active transportation users.

Caltrans is currently administering a Call for Projects from March 21 through May 21, 2014.

The ATP Program is likely to be one of the main potential sources of funding for design and construction of this project.

Web Link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/atp/>

State Highway Operations Protection Program

The State Highway Operations Protection Program (SHOPP) is a multi-year program of capital projects whose purpose is to preserve and protect the State Highway System. Funding is comprised of state and federal gas taxes. SHOPP funds capital improvements relative to maintenance, safety, and rehabilitation of state highways and bridges that do not add a new traffic lane to the system. Just over \$1 billion is allocated to SHOPP annually. Funding is based on need, so there are no set distributions by county or Caltrans district. There are no matching requirements for this program. Projects include rehabilitation, landscaping, traffic management systems, rest areas, auxiliary lanes, and safety. Caltrans Projects are “applied” for by each Caltrans District. Each project must have a completed Project Study Report (PSR) to be considered for funding. Projects are developed in fall every odd numbered year. Given the above, it doesn’t seem like SHOPP will be an important source of grant funds for project construction.

Web Link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/transprog/shopp.htm>

Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants

Caltrans Transportation Planning Grants are intended to promote strong and healthy communities, economic growth, and protection of our environment. These planning grants (Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning, Community-Based Transportation Planning, Partnership Planning, and Transit Planning) support closer placement of jobs and housing, efficient movement of goods, community involvement in planning, safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle mobility and access, smart or strategic land use, and commute alternatives. This program should be further explored as a potential source of funding for preparation of the Master Plan and Preliminary Engineering Report.

Web Link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/grants.html>

Office of Traffic Safety

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) has the mission to obtain and effectively administer traffic safety grant funds to reduce deaths, injuries and economic losses resulting from traffic related collisions in California. OTS distributes federal funding apportioned to California under the National Highway Safety Act and MAP-21. Grants are used to mitigate traffic safety program deficiencies, expand ongoing activity, or develop a new program. Grant funding cannot replace existing program expenditures, nor can traffic safety funds be used for program maintenance, research, rehabilitation, or construction.

OTS grants address several traffic safety priority areas including Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety. Eligible activities include programs to increase safety awareness and skills among pedestrians and bicyclists. Concepts may encompass activities such as safety programs, education, enforcement, traffic safety and bicycle rodeos, safety helmet distribution, and court diversion programs for safety helmet violators.

Web Link: <http://www.ots.ca.gov/>

Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program

Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) funds are allocated to projects that offset environmental impacts of modified or new public transportation facilities including streets, mass transit guideways, park-n-ride facilities, transit stations, tree planting to equalize the effects of vehicular emissions, and the acquisition or development of roadside recreational facilities, such as trails. State gasoline tax monies fund the EEMP. The EEMP program represents an opportunity to fund improvements as mitigation to highway work in the SR 1 corridor, as well as other highway facilities in San Luis Obispo County.

The EEMP currently has a call for projects; applications must be received by June 30, 2014.

Web Link: <http://resources.ca.gov/eem/>

California State Coastal Conservancy

The California State Coastal Conservancy manages several programs that provide grant funds for coastal trails, access, and habitat restoration projects. The funding cycle for these programs is open and on-going throughout the year. Funds are available to local government as well as non-profits. The Conservancy may be a funding source for bicycle facilities that improve access to San Luis Obispo's beaches, rivers, and creeks.

Web Link: <http://scc.ca.gov/category/grants/>

Habitat Conservation Fund

The Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) provides \$2 million dollars annually in grants for the conservation of habitat including wildlife corridors and urban trails statewide. Eligible activities include property acquisition, design, and construction. The HCF is 50% dollar for dollar matching program. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance is required. Urban projects should demonstrate how the project would increase the public's awareness and use of park, recreation, or wildlife areas.

Web Link: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21361

Wildlife and Habitat Restoration Funding Opportunities

Wildlife Conservation Board Public Access Program

This program funds land acquisitions that preserves wildlife habitat or provides recreational access for hunting, fishing or other wildlife-oriented activities. Up to \$250,000 is available per project with applications accepted quarterly. Eligible projects include interpretive trails, river access and trailhead parking areas. The state must have a proprietary interest in the project. Local agencies are generally responsible for the planning and engineering phases.

Web Link: <https://www.wcb.ca.gov/FundingSources.aspx>

State River Parkways Program

This goal of this program is to provide recreational, wildlife, flood management, water quality and urban waterfront revitalization benefits to communities along river corridors. Trail-related projects are a strong component of the program, by achieving recreation, interpretation and potentially conversion of abandoned industrial lands goals. Public access is a fundamental requirement of the program.

Web Link: http://resources.ca.gov/bonds_prop50riverparkway.html

State Water Resources Control Board Grants

Federal CWA 319(h) Program

This program is an annual federally funded nonpoint source pollution control program that is focused on controlling activities that impair beneficial uses and on limiting pollutant effects caused by those activities. States must establish priority rankings for waters on lists of impaired waters and develop action plans, known as Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), to improve water quality. Project proposals that address TMDL implementation and those that address problems in impaired waters are favored in the selection process. There is also a focus on implementing management activities that lead to reduction and/or prevention of pollutants that threaten or impair surface and ground waters. Since the Morro Bay Estuary is a sediment impaired water body, State and Federal funds may be available to control existing sources of sediment in the Chorro Creek Watershed to offset any erosion caused by trail construction and operation.

Web Link: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/319h/

The California Fish Passage Forum

The California Fish Passage Forum funds project proposals for fish passage projects in California that advance the Forum's mission to protect and revitalize anadromous fish populations by restoring connectivity of freshwater habitats throughout their historic range. The program funds projects at various levels depending upon need and annual revenues. This and other sources of fish passage funding could potentially be used to mitigate for trail project impacts crossing streams with steelhead.

Web Link: <http://www.cafishpassageforum.org/index.cfm?content.display&pageID=112>

Regional Funding Programs

Regional Transportation Improvement Program

The Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) funds are a portion of the State Transportation Improvement Program. The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, acting as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency in San Luis Obispo County is responsible for allocating the funding.

Web Link: <http://www.slocog.org/programs/funding-programming/funding-tip-administration>

TDA Article 3

Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 3 funds are generated from State gasoline sales taxes and are returned to the source counties from which they originate to fund transportation projects. Article 3 funds provide a 2 percent set aside of the County TDA funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects. Eligible projects include right-of-way acquisition; planning, design and engineering; support programs; and construction of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including retrofitting to meet ADA requirements, and related facilities. Each year SLOCOG approves a Program of Projects for San Luis Obispo County.

Web Link: <http://www.slocog.org/programs/funding-programming>

Local Funding Programs

Direct Local Jurisdiction Funding

Local jurisdictions can fund bicycle and pedestrian projects using a variety of sources. A city's general funds are often earmarked for non-motorized transportation projects, especially sidewalk and ADA improvements.

Future road widening and construction projects are one means of providing bike lanes and sidewalks. To ensure that roadway construction projects provide these facilities where needed, appropriate, and feasible, it is important that an effective review process is in place so that new roads meet the standards and guidelines presented in this Study.

Local Transportation Fund (LTF)

The LTF is derived from 1/4 cent of each 7½% collected on retail sales taxes within the county. LTF funds (originate from the Transportation Development Act) provide off-the-top funding for SLOCOG planning, administration, and for the CTSA operations. The remaining LTF is apportioned according to population for public transit, street/road improvements, and bikeway/pedestrian facilities. Some jurisdictions have the option of using LTF for local streets and roads projects, if SLOCOG has not made a determination for Unmet Transit Needs reasonable to meet.

Impact Fees

Another potential local source of funding is developer impact fees, typically tied to trip generation rates and traffic impacts produced by a proposed project. A developer may reduce the number of trips (and hence impacts and cost) by paying for on- and off-site pedestrian and bikeway improvements, which will encourage residents to walk and bicycle rather than drive. In-lieu parking fees may be used to help construct new or improved bicycle parking. A clear connection between the impact fee and the mitigation project must be established.

Special Taxing Districts

Special taxing districts, such as redevelopment districts, can be good instruments to finance new infrastructure – including shared use trails and sidewalks – within specified areas. New facilities are funded by assessments placed on those that are directly benefited by the improvements rather than the general public. In a “tax increment financing (TIF) district, taxes are collected on property value increases above the base year assessed property value. This money can then be utilized for capital improvements within the district. TIFs are especially beneficial in downtown redevelopment districts. These districts are established by a petition from landowners to a local government. The districts can operate independently from the local government and some are established for single purposes, such as roadway construction.

Other

Local sales taxes, fees, and permits may be implemented, requiring a local election. Parking meter revenues may be used according to local ordinance. Volunteer programs may substantially reduce the cost of implementing some of the proposed pathways. Use of groups such as the California Conservation Corp which offer low-cost assistance will be effective at reducing project costs. Local schools or community groups may use the bikeway or pedestrian project as a project for the year, possibly working with a local designer or engineer. Work parties may be formed to help clear the right-of-way where needed. A local construction company may donate or discount services. A challenge grant program with local businesses may be a good source of local funding, where corporations “adopt” a bikeway and help construct and maintain the facility.

F. Next Steps

Implementation of a complete Class I trail within the Chorro Valley, connecting the City of SLO to Morro Bay and beyond will be a multi-step process, completed as a number of individual phases or construction of separate segments that will link together over time.

This Feasibility Study provides a relatively general evaluation and analysis of potential trail alignments within Chorro Valley. Construction of actual trail projects will require additional site-specific planning, environmental review, and design development, with a number of subsequent steps. The actual next steps for any specific project will vary in terms of level of analysis, and the time involved to complete them. The following typical steps are required for construction of a public trail project requiring detailed planning, design, environmental review and project permitting prior to construction.

- Review and/or approval of this Feasibility Study by lead agencies and project stakeholders.
- Integration of Feasibility Study concepts into applicable Plans of lead agencies (City, County and other agency bicycle and pedestrian plans and Master Plans).
- Identification of individual projects, programming funds for project implementation.
- Continuing informal discussions of easement acquisition and right-of-way with stakeholders, leading to obtaining Agreements in Principle or Memorandums of Understanding for right-of-way as individual projects or phases move forward towards construction.
- Preparation of a follow up Preliminary Engineering Design, with greater focus on phases identified for initial design and construction.
- Completion of the required environmental review document(s) (CEQA/NEPA). Initially a Program Environmental Document on the Preliminary Engineering Design, with a focus on identified priority first phases, and with subsequent follow up environmental review of later phases.
- Securing funds for preliminary design and for trail construction (in Phases) as well as for needed mitigation projects such as fish passage barrier removal, roadway soil erosion control and stream and wetlands restoration.
- Obtaining regulatory permit approvals.

- Negotiation and completion of potential right-of-way (ROW), including easements, and trail use or licensing agreements.
- Preparation of detailed engineering design plans and construction documents.
- Publically bidding the project's Construction Plans.
- Construction, including construction oversight of the approved plans by a qualified Contractor to ensure that the project plans, along with all of the CEQA/NEPA mitigation measures and all permit conditions, are followed and implemented as approved.

The following steps outline the near-term process in more detail for trail planning and design, leading to trail construction:

1. Project Review and Approval

The Study Report, including alignment recommendations, will be presented to the SLOCOG Board for consideration. The City Councils of the Cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay and the County Board of Supervisors may also be presented with the Feasibility Study Report as an information item. Alternatively, this Feasibility Study could be received by the Parks and Recreation or Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees of the local governments.

The report should also be submitted to the stakeholder agencies (such as Caltrans, Cal Poly, California Men's Colony, Calif. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Service, Morro Bay Estuary, and Camp SLO for review. Where appropriate, this Feasibility Study would be integrated with ongoing planning efforts of each agency as part of a coordinated implementation effort. As a planning document, CEQA review would not be required at this time.

As discussed previously, a potential implementation sequence would envision completion of priority projects and gaps between existing trails segments, such as the important connection between the Cal Poly Campus at Highland Drive and Cuesta College.

2. Preliminary Engineering Design Report

A Conceptual Plan or and Preliminary Engineering Design Report should be completed as one of the early next steps to identify and confirm the most feasible and precise trail alignment, better identify costs and right-of-way needs, and to serve as the basis for subsequent environmental review and project permitting. Obtaining good topographic, property ownership and boundary information, including identifying all utilities and easements, should also be completed at this stage or immediately following it, at least for the trail segments identified or recommended as initial phases. The Master Plan can be completed at a 10-15% Design level, but right-of-way acquisition, and environmental review and project permitting may require 35% Design level completion for the initial phases or trail segments that might be constructed first. Master Planning/Preliminary Engineering should require six to nine months to complete.

3. CEQA/NEPA Documentation

As a planning study, this Feasibility Study itself is exempt from CEQA review. Initially, the Study can be presented to SLOCOG (and other decision-making entities) as an informational item, with a

request for direction to proceed with any follow-up technical, Preliminary Engineering/ Planning, or special environmental studies, direction to apply for grants and other sources of funding, and subsequent completion of planning/ preliminary engineering and environmental review.

As noted above, an environmental analysis needs to be conducted per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements prior to any project approved. A CEQA Initial Study Checklist must be prepared to determine if there are potentially significant environmental impacts. If there are potential impacts, then an expanded environmental assessment or a full EIR may need to be prepared, most likely focusing on specific project issues and initial priority phases. Mitigation measures may be incorporated into the project design such as fencing, separation or other measures, and completion of compensatory mitigation (fish passage/stream restoration, and roadway erosion control) to reduce or offset the potential environmental impacts. The public will have several opportunities to review and comment on the project and potential impacts in this process.

If the project receives federal funding, (it likely will) then environmental review will also need to comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines. Typically, a number of special technical environmental studies are conducted to assist in the CEQA/NEPA review and approval process. These will likely include:

- Biological Assessment/Natural Environment Study (NES) to verify presence, protection protocols, and mitigation measures for wetlands, stream courses, and sensitive wildlife and plant species that might be impacted by project activities.
- Section 106 Cultural Resources Study; a special focus may be on the Hollister Peak Ranch historic buildings, as well as other cultural resources previously identified or found during subsequent detailed field work.
- Section 4f determination, if any parks are located nearby that might be impacted or closed due to construction activities. This might include, for instance impacts associated with trail crossings of El Chorro Regional Park, as well as (potentially) Morro Bay State Park.
- Location Hydraulic Study, for segments within FEMA designated 100-year floodplain; especially for bridge crossings of stream courses.
- Traffic engineering study with recommendations for safety improvements and design features for new trail segments, as well as for needed improvements at key points/key intersections along Highway 1 for interim shoulder use areas based on the bicycle and pedestrian collision analysis.
- Soils and Geotechnical Investigation; coordinated with previous work to determine areas within the watershed where the project may help contribute to sediment reduction, develop design standards for project erosion control during and following trail construction, and to develop geotechnical design criteria for trails, bridges, over-crossings and boardwalk structures.

In addition to these Technical Studies, a separate assessment and document that identifies Avoidance/Minimization Measures, Mitigation requirements, and specific Mitigation Projects such as fish passage barrier removal, stream restoration and erosion control should be developed in close

co-ordination with all project stakeholders, especially Cal Poly, the California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal SLO Resource Conservation District, and the Morro Bay National Estuary.

If the environmental review and special studies identify feasible mitigation measures that adequately address potential project impacts, then a Mitigated Negative Declaration can be adopted by the lead agency, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be adopted by federal agencies (if applicable).

For any elements of the trail that involve minimal disturbance and construction, such as only striping, signage, a project may be eligible for consideration of a Categorical Exemption or Exclusion (NEPA), provided there are no water quality, wetlands, endangered species, or cultural resources impacts. However, a focused or full EIR/EIS could be required if any significant environmental issues are identified during the Initial Study. Nine months to one year should be allocated to environmental review.

4. Right-of-Way Agreements

If acquisition or permission for use of a property for the trail is needed in the form of a lease, easement or use agreement, this should be obtained, at least informally as an agreement in concept, before any significant further planning or design work begins. Typically right-of-way is secured after environmental studies are completed, but well before engineering design is completed, when the most feasible/preferred alignment is more precisely defined.

Separate agreements would be needed with each landowner or easement holder within a trail segment. Continued dialogue with respective property owners and stakeholders (Cal Poly, California Men's Colony, Camp SLO, Caltrans, CA Dept. Fish & Wildlife Service, Caltrans) will be critical to incorporate trail elements into current and planned projects where appropriate. Right-of-way negotiations will likely include provisions for identification of lead agency for the project, funding for construction and design standards and logistics issues such as way-finding, fencing and security, maintenance and operations, including the need for periodic closure for environmental, security or maintenance purposes. Right-of-way acquisition could take from 6 to 18 months to secure.

5. Project Permitting

Preparation of permit applications and requests for permit approvals from applicable regulatory agencies is typically completed concurrent with or following completion of preliminary engineering design. Typically, permitting can often be completed on well thought-out conceptual (35% submittal) plans. Many trail segments will likely be subject to permit and review associated with proximity to sensitive habitat areas. This will need to be confirmed in follow-up discussions with regulatory agencies. USACE, Morro Bay Estuary and the Calif. Dept. of Fish and Wildlife permits will likely be required for any localized wetlands fill associated with bridge, boardwalk, or culvert structures and could take 6 months to a year to acquire. .

The following project permits are anticipated:

- Coastal Development Permit , SLO County – all improvements
- Federal consistency review through the California Coastal Commission
- Grading/Building Permit Approval from SLO County (private lands)
- Compliance with Caltrans Scenic Easement
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 401 Nationwide wetlands fill permit
- CA Regional Water Quality Control Board Section 401 Water Quality certification
- CA Department of Fish and Wildlife 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement
- Caltrans and SLO County encroachment permits – bridge undercrossing and connections to state or county roadways

Typically six to nine months should be allocated to project permitting, although this can be conducted concurrently with the CEQA review.

6. Final Design

The design process can often proceed at the same time that the environmental review work and permitting is being completed. Next steps may include topographic, property or boundary and ROW/easement surveying, review of “as-built” drawings, completion of soil borings for pavement and boardwalk/bridge design, and preliminary trail design. Typically a design proceeds through several stages of preparation and review, from concept drawings to a final construction bid package (i.e., 35% completion, 70% completion, and 95% completion review and submittals). Depending on complexity, the completion of a final design and bid package, followed by public bidding, can take from six months for relatively simple projects such as signage and striping, to more than twelve to fifteen months for complex projects involving bridges and over-crossings and under-crosses.

Preparation of Final Engineering Plans and Construction Documents can take from three months to up to a year. This can also be undertaken concurrently with the later phases of environmental review and project permitting.

7. Trail Construction

Depending on size and complexity, trail construction can take from two or three (for simple signage and striping) to eight or more months to complete. Trail implementation can also be completed in phases, depending upon prioritization, available funding, and environmental requirements, permitting, or combined with other construction projects. The project may also be subject to seasonal implementation restrictions to avoid impacts to wildlife resources during nesting or breeding season. Trail construction can take from three months to six or more months.

G. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on a review and analysis of the Chorro Valley Trail corridor, the following Findings and Recommendations are provided:

Feasibility Findings

1. It is feasible to construct a trail from San Luis Obispo near the Cal Poly campus to the Hollister Peak Ranch east of Canet Road using the recommended alignment. There are few significant environmental or engineering constraints that can't be mitigated or overcome and project costs are reasonable compared to other regional trail projects. Nearly all of the proposed trail along this alignment is on public lands, and preliminary discussions with agency land owner representatives indicate a willingness to consider a trail, or there are viable optional alignments where local agency representatives have indicated a concern. Additional discussions with local agency representatives is needed and should continue on actively following the completion and acceptance of this Feasibility Study to keep momentum moving forward.
2. The trail segment from Hollister Peak Ranch to Canet Road would likely be located within the Caltrans right-of-way. Although this segment initially appears feasible, it would be necessary to proceed through the somewhat cumbersome Caltrans encroachment permit process in order to obtain a definitive answer. In addition, portions of the trail would be located adjacent to private farmlands, where there is some concern over potential impacts to farming operations, and would cross the San Bernardo creek tributary of Chorro Creek and therefore has some environmental and permitting challenges to overcome.
3. The feasibility of the trail segment from Canet Road to Quintana Road is uncertain at this time. This segment would also be primarily in the Caltrans right-of-way and portions of it would need to be constructed as a boardwalk on the steep Highway 1 roadway embankment above the San Luisito Creek channel and across the creek from private residential property. This would be challenging from an engineering perspective to construct and it is uncertain if Caltrans would approve the design concept. This segment therefore has some unresolved right-of-way, engineering, and environmental challenges that will require additional analysis, but that appear to be solvable.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that representatives of SLOCOG, the Cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay and SLO County Parks Department continue to meet with local agency representatives of the affected public lands to resolve outstanding issues associated with right-of-way with the objective of obtaining Agreements in Principal or Memorandums of Understanding as a predecessor to obtaining formal right-of-way.
2. It is recommended that SLOCOG and SLO County Parks Dept. move forward with additional Planning/Preliminary Engineering and CEQA environmental work for the Chorro Valley Trail project. This will entail obtaining funding and authorization for the planning, preliminary design, and environmental work. Although a Program-level CEQA environmental document may cover the entire trail corridor, the emphasis should be on the most feasible and readily constructible segment from near Highland Avenue to Hollister Peak Ranch, with the objective of trail construction within three to five years.